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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ARF](#) [BM](#) [VM](#)
SUBJECT: VIETNAM, ASEAN FM MEETING, BURMA

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: Vietnam will send an Assistant Minister to the Bali ministerial and is withholding judgment on what to do about Burma until it hears what Malaysian FM Hamid has to say. Vietnam is generally not inclined to support external intervention in Burma, but seems willing to go along with the Malaysian recommendation, whatever that might be. They expect at least some action on Burma, even if it is only reiterating the December statement. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) The ASEAN Foreign Minister's Meeting in Bali April 18 overlaps with the Vietnamese Communist Party's 10th National Party Congress, MFA ASEAN expert Vu Ho told Poloff April 10. As a result, FM Nguyen Dzy Nien will not attend the meeting, and will send Assistant Minister Nguyen Trung Thanh instead.

¶3. (SBU) The highlight of the Bali meeting will be the report by Malaysian Foreign Minister Syed Hamid, Ho said. FM Hamid's visit to Burma "was a disappointment," Ho related. "He basically had a courtesy call on the Prime Minister and then had to travel an entire day to the new mountain capital for a meeting with the Burmese Foreign Minister, for which we still do not have a readout. Then he cut his trip short." Vietnam understands that the trip was not everything all the ASEAN countries hoped for, Ho said, but it is important to recognize that it is a step in the right direction. "This is the first time in forty years that ASEAN has done this, and we feel it opens the door for communication." However, he continued, if the Burmese leadership feels that ASEAN's involvement threatens their security interests, internal or external, "they will refuse us, even ASEAN." For ASEAN, sacrificing hard-won internal solidarity is very difficult, but it is also necessary to address "external concerns" from "important ASEAN partners," Ho explained.

¶4. (SBU) Much will depend on FM Hamid's report, Ho said. Some countries, including Vietnam, feel that Burma has already made big sacrifices for ASEAN's overall well-being, particularly its decision to forego the chairmanship, and that effort should be recognized. However, FM Hamid's report will be the deciding factor on how ASEAN decides to go forward. ASEAN is not going to stop its efforts to help improve the Burma situation, he added; at the very least, the group will probably repeat the December statement. Still, all ASEAN actions take "lots of time, and lots of discussion," so the United States would be wise to be patient. "There will be some progress," Ho promised.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: The MFA was reluctant to meet with us last week, but readily agreed today; this, plus the normally taciturn Vu Ho's relative expansiveness, suggests that we were being given a cleared message.

MARINE